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# State Dept. 'In Dark' On Imprisoned Yanks

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WASHINGTON—The State Department professes to know almost nothing about the 23 or 24 American prisoners in Cuban jails whose freedom is now under negotiation.

Department spokesmen say there is little solid information about how most of them got into jail, or for what.

A Chicagoan, Leonard L. Schmidt, 23, is reported among the Americans held.

His mother, Mrs. Vivian Davis, 3601 S. Union, widow who remarried, said:

"At last, maybe there is some hope. All I have been left with up to now have been horrible imaginations."

"The prisoners are American citizens," says Abba Schwartz, of the Bureau of Security and Consular Affairs, "and we'd

like to get them back in this country."

SCHWARTZ SAYS that no official list of American prisoners has ever been furnished the U.S. government by the Cuban government.

"We've made up our own list from second-hand sources," he says, "usually letters of inquiry from relatives in this country. These letters often tell conflicting stories and there is no way of knowing for sure how accurate they may be."

Some of the prisoners, he said, were apparently tried before Cuban "revolutionary

councils" in the heyday of Castro purges. Others apparently were jailed for violating what Schwartz described as "local ordinances."

Relatives have identified some as "anti-Castro" and said they are essentially political prisoners.

ONE IS A WOMAN, identified as Mrs. Martha O'Neal, of Florida or Georgia. She is apparently the only woman in the group.

Schwartz said he had no information on charges against her.

Cuban negotiator James B. Donovan, who arranged the release of Cuban invasion prisoners, has reported that Premier Fidel Castro has promised to discuss the release of the Americans.

At the same time the State Department is seeking their release through the Swiss Embassy in Havana, in the absence of Cuban-U.S. diplomatic relations.

SCHWARTZ SAID that all of the prisoners were jailed by the Castro regime, but that none of them had anything to do with the abortive Cuban invasion.

"All of them were put in prison before the Bay of Pigs action," he said.

He added that there have been reports from the International Red Cross that, as a group, they are "in pretty bad shape."

Other State Department sources said that "a few" are men who have fled the United States, perhaps because of difficulties with law enforcement authorities.

Schwartz said he knew nothing about them.

The Cuban government has made a formal demand for the release of the prisoners. Donovan has mentioned